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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 000039

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STATE FOR EAP/TC AND PM
STATE PASS USTR FOR STRATFORD AND WINELAND, TREASURY FOR
OASIA/MPISA,
NSC FOR LOI, COMMERCE FOR 4431/ITA/MAC/AP/OPB/TAIWAN, USDA
FOR FAS/OCRA RADLER AND BEILLARD

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [TW](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: TAIWAN NSC ON PIRATES, BEEF, HU JINTAO SPEECH AND
INTERNATIONAL SPACE

Classified By: The Director for Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary. This is an action request; please see paragraph 11. During a January 12 meeting with Director Young, NSC Secretary General Su Chi told us Taiwan is not seriously considering sending naval vessels to the Gulf of Aden to protect its merchant ships. This was more a PR effort following Chinese offers to protect Taiwan shipping off the coast of Somalia. But, he suggested, further information about assistance available to all ships in distress would allay Taiwan concerns. On other issues, President Ma wants to move forward on opening Taiwan's market to beef by releasing in January the Department of Health's report on the (negligible) risks involved. In cross-Straits relations, Taiwan is looking for a way to discuss promising signals from China on international space. End Summary.

Gulf of Aden Piracy: Taiwan Shipper Seeks PRC Protection

¶2. (C) Press comments by MAC Vice Chairman Chao Chien-min, that Taiwan might dispatch naval vessels to the Gulf of Aden to protect Taiwan merchant ships, were a response to a formal inquiry from a Taiwan shipowner about the possibility of taking up the PRC offer for assistance in the event of a pirate attack, Taiwan National Security Advisor Su Chi told the Director during a January 12 meeting. The situation is made more complex, Su added, because the ship in question is Taiwan-owned but South Korean-flagged. The fact that 80-90 percent of Taiwan-owned vessels fly flags of convenience notwithstanding, and despite the government's limited interest in getting involved in a security issue so far from home, it needed to be responsive in some way. Of course, Su noted, the fact that China is using the security situation in the Indian Ocean to score political points only made it all the more important that Taiwan respond quickly and appropriately.

¶3. (C) Su was adamant that Taiwan did not intend to rely on PLA vessels to protect its shippers. Likewise, Taiwan understood that sending its own naval vessels to the Gulf of Aden to do so was impractical on many levels. Taiwan will have to rely on the protection afforded by the multinational

coalition to protect shipping in the region. To a large extent, MAC Vice Chairman Chao's statement was part of a PR effort to demonstrate the government's concern for its shippers and to prevent the PLA from taking advantage of the piracy problem in Somalia, but information about assistance available to all ships in distress would allay Taiwan concerns. If there was any change in Taiwan's approach to the issue, Su emphasized, Taiwan would closely consult with the United States.

14. (C) DIR noted his personal understanding that coalition naval vessels patrolling the area would likely offer assistance to any vessel in distress, regardless of where it is registered. He agreed to seek guidance on the conditions under which coalition naval vessels would act in the event of attacks on ships flying non-coalition flags. Of particular value, Su stressed, would be information his government can release to the public. At DIR,s urging, he agreed to make sure that TECRO Washington also submitted a formal request for this information.

Beef: &Taiwan Wants to Get Rid of the Issue8

15. (C) DIR expressed appreciation for President Ma,s personal involvement in ensuring that Taiwan meets his commitment to release the risk assessment report on U.S. beef in January. Su noted that Ma had called Health Minister Yeh to confirm that this would be done and that his ministry would advocate for the report,s central message (i.e., the negligible risk posed by U.S. beef). DIR noted Yeh,s

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comment that, in order to preserve the report,s credibility, the Health Ministry would could not remove the erroneous assertion of one contributing scientist that Asians are genetically more susceptible to BSE than other races. However, the executive summary DOH plans to release shortly after the report itself will not mention this scientifically baseless claim.

16. (C) Coinciding with the release of the report, the U.S. beef industry has already started a campaign in support of their product, DIR said. In addition to taking out ads in Taipei papers, producers were planning a public event in early February to promote their products. DIR and Health Minister Yeh both plan to take part, to underscore the Taiwan government,s endorsement. Su agreed this was a good idea, noting that Yeh,s growing confidence in his role was making him a more effective minister. DIR stressed the need to keep positive momentum behind the market opening, noting that he would raise the issue January 21 with Premier Liu and would keep in close touch with Su Chi if progress showed any signs of stalling. &We will get this done,8 Su assured DIR. &We want to get rid of the issue.8 The United States hoped to do so as quickly as possible, DIR said, particularly since there are other agriculture issues that need to be resolved, including rice, pork and Taiwan,s imperfect system for determining maximum residue levels (MRLs).

Hu Jintao Speech: Hints of Action on International Space

17. (C) While there are reasons to be optimistic that China wants to reduce cross-Strait tensions, there is no evidence to support Hong Kong media reports that suggested China is pulling back missiles directed against Taiwan as a show of good faith in the wake of Hu Jintao,s December 31 speech on Taiwan policy, Su said. Although Hu,s remarks contain signs of new flexibility, military confidence building measures (CBMs) will come relatively late in the rapprochement process. It seems clear, Su suggested, that Hu,s six points are arranged in the rough order in which China wants to pursue them, with point one laying down China,s fundamental principle (i.e., its &One China8 policy) and the following points proceeding roughly in the order of difficulty,

beginning with economics and ending with military steps. It is important to remember, Su noted, that Taiwan is only one of Hu,s audiences. Just as important are &foot-draggers8 on the mainland, and Hu,s goal was to send a message to the parts of the PRC bureaucracy, notably the PLA, that do not support steps to improve cross-Strait ties.

¶18. (C) Su was more positive in his assessment of the implications of Hu,s speech for Taiwan,s efforts to expand its international space. One example of the encouraging tone of Hu,s remarks, Su said, was his use of the phrase &nei hao8 (translated as &internal friction8 in the Xinhua official English text) in the section on international space (point number five in the text). By using language originally coined by Taiwan, Su argued, Hu was tacitly accepting President Ma,s call for a diplomatic truce.

¶19. (C) Although Taiwan and PRC scholars give the government unofficial insights in to Beijing's thinking, Su said, Taiwan had yet to engage China directly about Taiwan,s quest for observer status in the WHO and WHA. The challenge was to come up with a mechanism for discussions that was workable and confidential enough to engage in authoritative discussions on a sensitive topic and that was, at the same time, answerable to Taiwan,s political system. In particular, Su said, he was looking for a way to bring the LY into the conversation in a way that would not derail the process (or, he hinted, let LY Speaker Wang Jin-pyng hijack it). Whatever the mechanism, though, Taiwan is committed to keeping the United States fully informed of its contacts with, approaches to, and difficulties with China, Su said.

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Comment and Action Request

¶10. (C) Su's comments, coupled with Defense Minister Chen's similar remarks last Friday (reported septel) make it clear Taiwan is in no rush to deploy its naval assets to the Gulf ofAden anytime soon. But it felt compelled to counter the malicious PLA offer last week to protect Taiwan shipping from piracy by publicly announcing its review of all contingencies. What Taipei is really looking for are assurances that their flagged or owned ships can receive protection fromt he coalition flotilla currently being deployed in the region if they are threatened.

¶11. (C) Action Request: We would appreciate information, if at all possible in a form that can be shared with Taiwan authorities (which would presumably release the information to the public), on the ROE and other relevant informtion for the multinational force now operating in the Gulf of Aden. Particularly useful would be procedures for shipping companies with vessels in the region to follow in the event of an emergency.
SYOUNG